

US FOREST SERVICE NORTHWEST MONTANA BACKCOUNTRY AVALANCHE ADVISORY



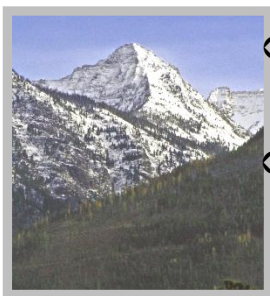
FOR THE GLACIER PARK AND FLATHEAD & KOOTENAI NATIONAL FOREST AREAS

Avalanche advisory does not apply to developed ski areas

Issue Date: 8:00 AM, Tuesday, March 13, 2012
Valid Until: Midnight, Tuesday, March 13, 2012
Next Update: Friday, March 16, 2012
Issued by: Tony Willits

This advisory is a product of the US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture. Along with other snow and avalanche information, it is originally posted at <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>. An audio summary is available via telephone at 406-257-8402

All Mountain Ranges



7,500 ft. elevation



5,000 ft.



Avalanche Danger Summary

3 - Considerable : 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation, on steep, open slopes and gullies, with new storm snow accompanied by moderate to strong S/SW winds

2 - Mod : below 5,000

Avalanche Danger Trend

Remain at current levels through Wednesday. May trend upwards after Wednesday night with climbing freezing levels and the possibility of rain up to and above 6000 feet.

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION

All Mountain Ranges - 5,000 to 7,500 ft. elevation

Danger Level	3 - CONSIDERABLE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dangerous avalanche conditions • Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious route-finding, and conservative decision-making essential • Caution is advised on lee slopes of exposed ridges where wind slabs are building with moderate to strong S/SW winds
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural avalanche possible • Human triggered avalanches likely
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small avalanches in many areas • Larger avalanches in specific areas • Very large avalanches in isolated areas

AVALANCHE – INSTABILITY DESCRIPTION**All Mountain Ranges – below 5,000 ft. elevation**

Danger Level	2 - MODERATE
Confidence	Fair
Travel Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heightened avalanche conditions on steep, open slopes and gullies, particularly those that recently received significant new snowfall and wind loading • Evaluate snow and terrain carefully • Watch out for climbing freezing levels
Likelihood of Avalanches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural avalanche unlikely • Human triggered avalanches possible
Avalanche Size & Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small avalanches in specific areas • Larger avalanches in isolated areas

Because of the general nature of this advisory message, each backcountry party will always need to make their own time and site specific avalanche hazard evaluations. This advisory best describes conditions at the time of its issuance. As time passes avalanche and snow conditions may change, sometimes quite rapidly. Elevation and geographic distinctions used are approximate and transition zones between hazards exist.

Recent Mountain Weather

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spotty occurrences of moderate snow fall at upper elevations over Sunday night, with partial clearing for a short period. At least, moderate dense snow fall began to cycle in by midafternoon on Monday through early Tuesday AM with moderate (17 to 25 mi/h) S/SW winds
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent storm cycle entered with relatively warm temps and a higher density snow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ West Cabinets had 1.6 inches of snow water equivalent (SWE) in the last 12 hours and appears to be on leading edge of this frontal passage. ◦ Southern Glacier National Park received .6 inches of SWE in the last 12 hours, while Northern Swan and East Cabinets receiving half that amount in the last 12 hours.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overnight temperatures have climbed slightly and are at or just above freezing at upper elevations.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winds have been moderate with the entry of this cold front

Field Observation Locations

Monday, 3-12-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whitefish Mountain north of Upper Whitefish Lake
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Observer Report Locations

Monday, 3-12-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None on Monday did receive a report of triggered avalanche on the Kootenai NF and info sent out as email.
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Avalanches Observed

- None observed on Monday, with good visibility in AM fair visibility in late PM

Instability Concern / Avalanche Problem	Level of Concern	Most★★★ Less★★ Least ★		
New Storm or Near Surface Snow	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New dense snow will continue to load persistent weak layer of buried surface hoar from early February, especially on lee sides of upper elevation ridges 		
Wind Loading	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wind transport will likely cause wind slabs on northerly and easterly aspects with new snow overnight. 		
Recent or Persistent Buried Weak Layer	★★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued loading of persistent weak layer and in some locations the basal decomposing facet layer. 		
Spring Wet Snow or Melt-Freeze				
Rain-on-Snow	★	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperatures will climb in the next few days and concern with rain on snow events are possible 		
Loose Snow				
Other Concerns				

Weather Forecast

[Current NWS Backcountry Forecast](#)

Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of Pacific Storm Systems during the week will be moving through our region with a persistent southwesterly flow. The frontal passage could drop up to a foot of snow to upper elevations and mountain passes along the Idaho/Montana Border. Winds will be at least moderate through Tuesday night. Snow levels will climb Wednesday through Thursday with the potential of rain up to 6000 feet.
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Snow fall amounts are predicted to be moderate through Tuesday.
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperatures will be in the upper 30's to low 40's on Tuesday and into the low 20's on Tuesday night.
Wind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SW winds are expected to be moderate (17 to 24 mi/h) through Tuesday.
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Avalanche Outlook

Trend	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avalanche hazard will remain at current levels through Wednesday. May trend upwards after Wednesday night with climbing freezing levels and the possibility of rain at up to and above 6000 feet.
Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The location of the persistent weak layer of buried surface hoar is variable across the region and not finding in one place or on one aspect does not mean it does not still exist. Investigate the snow pack with snow pits to determine if the areas you are riding over are occupied with this dragon. Snowmobilers in the Yaak area found this persistent weak layer and all involved avoided injury or worse. Don't let yourself grow complacent, determine what snow instabilities exist where you are traveling.• The basal layer of decomposing facets could be tested with new loading and potentially rain as temperatures continue to warm. Avoid all avalanche paths and run outs in the event of rain on snow or as periods of thaw linger.
Comment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>ALWAYS carry and know how to use your avalanche safety equipment</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">○ <i>Transceiver</i>○ <i>Probe</i>○ <i>Shovel</i><i>(A lack of this equipment played in the recent fatal incidents)</i>• <i>Watch for any rapid changes in weather conditions beyond forecast amounts</i>• <i>Check out the site specific snow stability before jumping in or on any slope that has the potential to avalanche</i>